

MEDIA RELEASE

16 April 2020

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

CREATE CALLS FOR 6 MONTH EXTENSION OF CARE & SUPPORT FOR AT RISK 18'S DURING COVID-19

The Australian child protection system is facing an unprecedented challenge during the global pandemic, Covid-19. In spite of this, now more than ever, CREATE Foundation is answering the call sustaining the work in key advocacy areas and providing young people at risk with up-to-date, reliable information and supports to ensure they can be empowered, safe and well.

CREATE says when young people turn 18 and are scheduled to exit the care system and transition to independence, accessing housing is very challenging, even under normal circumstances.

CREATE Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, says *“Through our independent consultations with young people we know that over 35% experience homelessness within the first year of transitioning from care, and in this current climate the complexity of the situation leads to additional challenges around accessing housing and basic supports.”*

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care). CREATE develops policy and research to report on and advocate for a better care system.

CREATE is particularly concerned about those turning 18, as their struggle to find suitable housing during transitioning to independence is now compounded during Covid-19.

CREATE's targeted communication has been sent to each state and territory's relevant Department requesting a minimum of 6 months' extension of the transition process (including all residential, foster and kinship care placements). There has been some encouraging progress so far, in South Australia and the Northern Territory. South Australia Acting Deputy Chief, Sue McDonald shared they are committed to extending our support and ensuring there are services available to young people transitioning from care and protection orders in this time of uncertainty. Territory Families Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ken Davies, has also confirmed that no child in the NT will exit into homelessness, and instead is able to stay with carers and/or residential placement until the time they have secure housing.

CREATE also commends governments who are ensuring that young people in care have the option to continue attending school or after-school care and holiday programs, which help offer placement stability. Read more via www.create.org.au

Media comment from CREATE's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a local young person with care experience from your region can be arranged via Leigh White, CREATE Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

See p2, for info on HOW CREATE IS SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE during Covid-19.

CREATE is providing multiple sources of reliable information online.

If a young person with a care experience is finding it hard right now and could do with some support or information, CREATE offers multiple ways to access the latest key updates:

- Regular updates are available on [CREATE's COVID 19 update blog](#)
- If a young person has concerns about the potential impact of this situation they can read reliable and current information here - [COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- Children and young people looking for what they can do at home can check out CREATE's [ideas to get you through being stuck at home blog post](#).
- CREATE has a giant purple mascot, named Gus, with a dedicated YouTube channel. A compilation of young people's questions on the impacts of Coronavirus has been answered here on [Gus' Coronavirus Q+A video](#)
- CREATE continues providing [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) updates and young people can email CREATE direct on their website.
- The State Coordinators are available via SMS, phone and email, continuing supporting children and young people.
- Fun activities using alternative delivery methods, including a fun [Stuck at home competition](#) until 16th April.

The restrictions around social distancing may continue well into 2020 and CREATE is utilising technology to enable **remote delivery options** for staff to remain in contact with young people in meaningful ways.

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

1. 45,000 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2019.
2. Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population.
3. 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care.
4. 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care.
5. 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed.
6. 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings.
7. 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care.
8. 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan.

McDowall, J. J. (2015). Sibling placement and contact in out-of-home care. Sydney: CREATE Foundation

national new south wales office

CREATE Foundation Limited ABN 69 088 075 058

A 12 Union Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | **T** 02 9267 1999

 1800 655 105  www.create.org.au  facebook.com/CREATEfnd  @CREATEfnd